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S P E E C H

OF

MAJOR BEN. M. PIATT,

OF COVINGTON, KY.,

DELIVERED AT

HOPKINS' HALL, CINCINNATI,

FRIDAY EVENING, JULY 28, 1876.

C I N C I N N A T I :

ROBERT CLARKE & CO., PRINTERS.

1876.

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MAJOR BEN. M. PIATT,^V

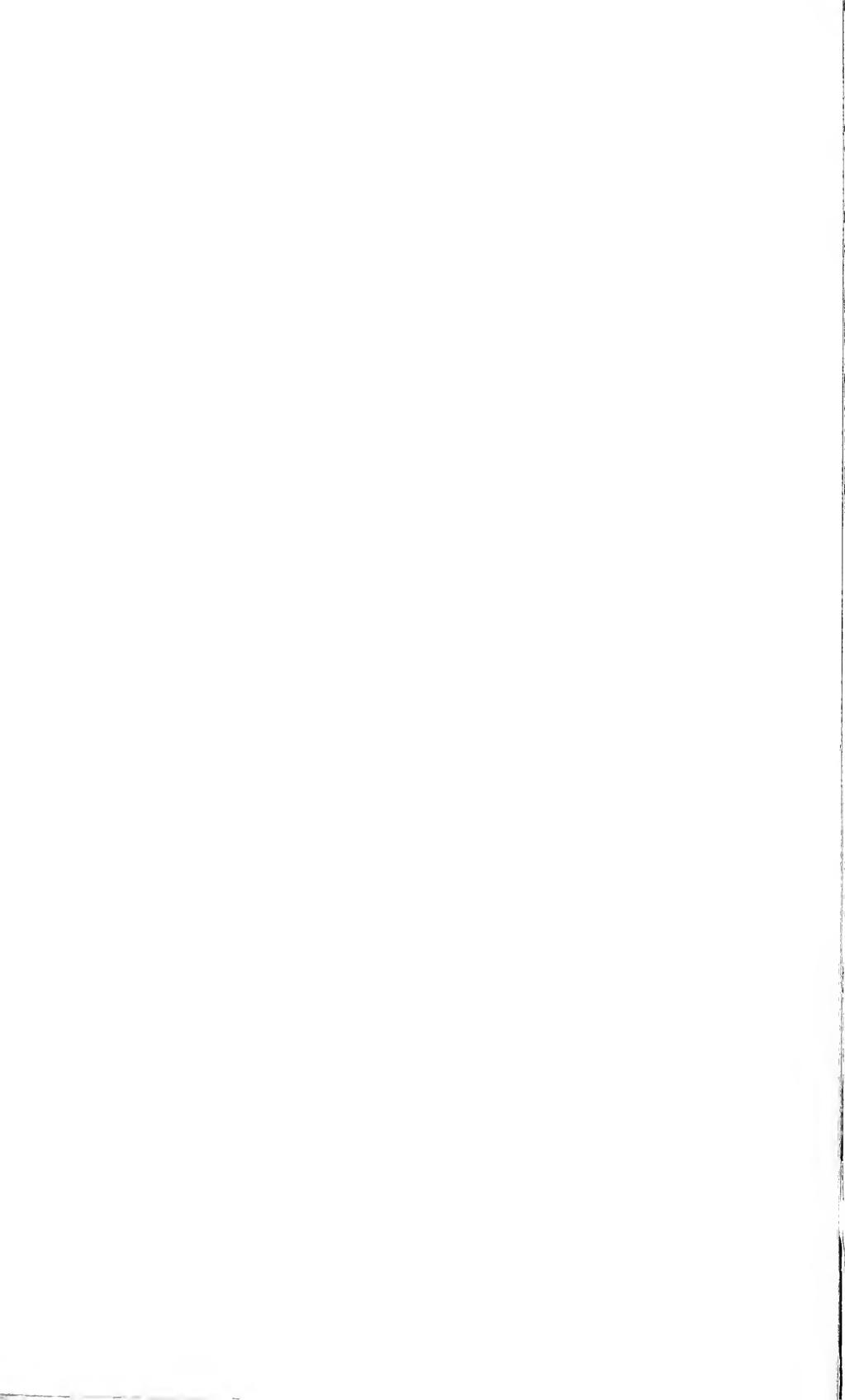
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ADDRESS.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen :

I assure you it is with no small degree of pride and pleasure that I come before you this evening to take a part, however humble, in this meeting. I am thankful for the compliment of being invited to be present upon this occasion, and to address you. I am happy to stand upon the same platform with one whom I honor so much as I do Judge Johnston, and to unite my voice with his in advocating the claims for the Presidency of the United States of one so richly deserving of such a distinction as your fellow-citizen and present Executive,

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES ;

the man who declared, when the rebellion broke out, that he would rather go into the army and die, or get killed, than to take no part in the struggle; the man who said that a man who would come home from his place in the field to canvass for a seat in Congress, ought to be scalped; the man who, when asked, after he was elected, when he was going to Washington, answered that he never intended to go to Washington until he could go through Richmond; the man who, wherever placed by the people of this country, has discharged every single duty faithfully and well; the man whose courage and integrity are alike unquestioned; and whose character the more it is examined becomes the brighter. This, I say, is the man whom I am proud to be here to praise. This is the man for whom I am glad to raise my voice as a Kentuckian, and for whom I am here to assure you that the solid Republican vote of Kentucky will be cast on the 7th day of next November, when the free, liberty-loving citizens of that grand old common-

wealth go to the polls to exercise the right of suffrage. We are not so sanguine as to expect to carry the state, but we are determined to see to it that the whole vote shall be cast. The time is, in my opinion, not very far distant when a great and grand revolution will be worked in Kentucky polities, and that, ere many more elections shall take place, the state will be Republican. There is no reason why she should not be, and I for one intend to do all in my power, little though it be, to accomplish that object. In every general canvass the Democratic majority is decreased, and of course it is only a question of time. My belief is that Mr. Bristow would have carried the state, but of course that would have been because the people there were so warmly attached to him personally, and he would have received thousands of Democratic votes that will now be polled for Tilden and Hendricks.

My belief is that the welfare of this country—its continuance as a nation—depends upon the success of the Republican party in the present canvass. The time is just coming when the many obstacles that have stood in our way will be no longer capable of hindering the grand work destined to be done by us; and under auspices such as are vouchsafed to us at this important juncture, in the excellent ticket we have placed in the field, there is nothing to prevent our party from doing its whole duty, and proving conclusively to all the nations of the earth the soundness of the theory of self-government, and our ability to perpetuate a republic. We must not lose sight, as we go along, of the mighty work of the Republican party, and the trials through which it was compelled to pass for so many years—long, long, weary years of warfare and dissension. The Republican party was born to have trouble worthy its great mission. On the 7th day of November, 1860, the very next day after the election of the lamented

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

the Palmetto flag was unfurled in Charleston harbor; three days afterward, in the South Carolina legislature, secession was proposed; on the 11th of the same month

Senator Hammond, of South Carolina, resigned; and in seven days from that time Georgia appropriated a million of dollars to arm the state against the Federal government; on the 1st day of December, 1860, an immense secession meeting was held in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, and in less than ten days Howell Cobb resigned his position as Secretary of the Treasury; on the 14th of the same month James Buchanan opposed reinforcing Fort Moultrie; next day General Cass resigned his position as Secretary of State; and within a week South Carolina adopted the ordinance of secession. On the 25th of the same month the members of Congress from South Carolina resigned their seats; on the 27th of the same month the revenue cutter William Aiken surrendered to the authorities of South Carolina. The next day the same authorities took Castle Pinckney and Fort Moultrie; and the day after John B. Floyd resigned his position as Secretary of War. On the 2d day of January, 1861, Governor Ellis, of North Carolina, took possession of Fort Macon; two days from that time Governor Moore, of Alabama, seized upon Fort Morgan and the United States arsenal at Mobile; and on the 8th of the same month Jacob Thompson resigned his position as Secretary of the Interior. Between the 9th day of the same month and the first day of February, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas all passed ordinances of secession; the Florida troops took possession of the navy-yard at Pensacola; Virginia appropriated a million of dollars to be used by the state against the general government; Jefferson Davis resigned his seat in the Senate; and the United States arsenal at Augusta, Georgia, was seized.

On the 1st day of February, 1861, the mint and custom house at New Orleans were seized by the authorities of Louisiana; and on the 4th of the same month, a Southern Confederacy was formed at Montgomery, Alabama. Five days thereafter Jefferson Davis was elected President of the Southern Confederacy; and in ten days from that time Fort Kearney, Kansas, was seized by the Confederates.

On the 5th day of March, 1861—the day after the inau-

guration of Mr. Lincoln—Beauregard took command at Charleston, S. C., and, on the 7th day of the same month, stopped all communication between Fort Sumter and Charleston. In continuation of this most monstrous and wicked work, Fort Sumter was fired upon on the 12th of April, 1861, which, of course, demanded of Abraham Lincoln immediate action; and therefore, on the 15th of the same month, he issued his proclamation for the seventy-five thousand three-months men. It will be seen that nearly all of the acts of insubordination and disobedience to the laws of the country that I have named

WERE FULLY DEVELOPED

before Mr. Lincoln had ever done, or had even had an opportunity of doing, a single official act in his position as President of the United States. He had been fairly elected; was known throughout the entire country as an upright, honest, patriotic man, with no intention to do anything but his duty. But the Democratic party would not wait to see what kind of an administration he would have. They were determined, *simply because Mr. Lincoln was elected,*

TO BREAK UP THE GOVERNMENT

between the 6th of November, 1860, and the 4th of March, 1861; and with an imbecile like Buchanan, who was as dishonest as he was weak, they came very near laying an immovable foundation for their terrible work. With all this staring us full in the face, and knowing the integrity of our party, in spite of the few bad men that have crept into it, are we ready to again give the government into the hands of the men, and those who sympathized with them, that made the record to which I have referred, and who, in the main, still stand by that record, and hold that they were right?

The fearful and momentous day upon which the first hostile gun was fired, the work of the Republican party had its beginning, and it has continued in its work for this country,

AS A NATION,

ever since; and with the help of Almighty God, who holdeth the destinies of nations in the hollow of his hand, that party will live until its work is done, and its greatness fully manifested to the farthest reaches of the earth. It will live to see the day when the very same voices that are now raised in its denunciation and vilification will gladly and willingly accord to it the full measure of praise to which it is entitled. It will live to see the day when the men who are now so foolhardy and infatuated with the idea of Mr. Tilden's election, as to flaunt in the faces of Republicans the colors of the Southern Confederacy, will regret with shame their insane behavior. It will live to see the day when the widow of an officer of the Union army can unfurl in peace anywhere in this broad land the flag that was borne upon the field of battle by her brave husband. It will live to see the day when

NO MORE MURDERS

will be committed upon men for loving their whole country, and going forth when it was assailed to do battle for its salvation. It will live to see the day, in spite of all the opposition it has had, when it will be loved and respected the world over, as the grandest political party that ever existed.

One of the most exciting, instructive, and remarkable conventions ever held in this country, closed its labors on the 16th day of last month, at Exposition Hall in this city. Before that convention, as candidates for the high and dignified office of President of the United States, were some of the most prominent men of this nation, honored and distinguished both at home and abroad for their valuable services, civil as well as military. The far-off State of Maine presented to that convention her renowned favorite, James G. Blaine. New York came with plumes and banners in honor of her no less distinguished son, Roscoe Conkling. Indiana was there with her heroic, faithful, old war-horse, Oliver P. Morton. Pennsylvania came with her well-beloved son, Governor Hartranft. Kentucky came

with one no less distinguished, no less honored, no less able, no less beloved than any I have named, Benjamin H. Bristow. Ohio, too, was there, with the loyal, earnest, patriotic name of a great and good man, her present Governor, Rutherford B. Hayes, in honor of whose

UNANIMOUS NOMINATION,

and in pursuance of our determination to do all in our power to secure his election, we have gathered together this evening.

It would be more than useless now to repeat or rehearse to you, who know them as well as we do in Kentucky, the hopes and fears of the different factions that made up that grand body of seven hundred and fifty-six men so carefully selected. Many a heart beat high and strong with hope at one time, that doubtless at other times, during the progress of that convention, became almost as still as death. We, of Kentucky, with an honest pride, of which none of us ever should or ever will feel ashamed, hoped till the very last moment that our brave, high-souled, patriotic candidate, the mere mention of whose name in the city of Cincinnati is a signal for the most deafening applause, would be the favored one; but we were destined to defeat. But rest assured, my fellow-citizens, that we do not propose to allow our state pride, or any degree of individual favoritism, to cause us to falter now in supporting the wise selections made by that able and distinguished assemblage. This is a question that affects

NOT KENTUCKY ALONE,

but the whole country, and it is our bounden and sacred duty, and I assure you it is our determination, to stand as firmly and faithfully by Rutherford B. Hayes as we would have stood by Benjamin H. Bristow, had he been the chosen one. Throughout the length and breadth of Kentucky, the republican party, with one accord, is ready to join with him cordially and cheerfully in saying that the convention has done "a grand work."

Time, as he moves forward in his never-ceasing march,

brings us countless lessons of experience, and these lessons are exceedingly valuable to us as we pass from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age. We learn too truly that man often proposes and God disposes. We learn "many a time and oft" that what we ardently desire is never permitted to come into our possession. We learn that in the great events that are developed in the battle of life, in acting our part we must aim at the greatest good for the greatest number; and especially in a Government like ours every one should fully understand, and duly appreciate the fact that the will of the people—the will of the majority—must be the ruling element, and the minority must rest satisfied under the decision of the majority whenever fairness and honesty have been faithfully observed.

Three hundred and eighty-four delegates were in favor of Rutherford B. Hayes for the high office of chief magistrate of this nation. This alone were enough to demand and secure the unqualified acquiescence of every faithful Republican from one end of this land to the other; but the obligation became all the more binding when the nomination was declared unanimous. In Rutherford B. Hayes we find precisely the qualities that the country at this time so much

NEEDS AND DEMANDS.

He is a man able and honest; brave and chivalrous; intelligent and accomplished; and if elected, which we confidently hope and believe he will be, he will surround himself with a cabinet of competent advisers who will conscientiously study the interests of the country, giving preference to no particular locality. And this, allow me to urge upon you, my friends and fellow-citizens, is an idea of no small importance. It is at this time imperatively and vitally necessary that our President shall be one who loves his whole country, and does not cherish in his heart any other sentiment than love for all his fellow-citizens. He must be a man who knows "no North, no South, no East, no West, nothing but the Union." My earnest belief is that a truer man to this Government never breathed the pure free air of our land; and I ask the question here, as I propose to

ask it in my own state during the coming canvass—In whom should we trust if not in such a man as the one we are now considering? No man can consistently be of the opinion that this country will not improve under the administration of such men as we have put in the field. The best evidence in the world to judge men by is their record, and if there lives a man with a better one than Mr. Hayes, or Mr. Wheeler either, I would like to know who he is, and where he is from. The thing is simply impossible, for both of our candidates are without stain or blot.

Now, so far as I am concerned—and I base my opinion upon the judgment of some of the very best and wisest men of the country—I feel perfectly confident that Hayes and Wheeler will be elected by a large majority; and if they are elected I feel and know that the people of all parts of the country will have their interests in safe and reliable hands. Every department of the government will be carefully watched over, and administered with a conscientious regard for the rights of all, be they high, or be they low, be they Republicans, or be they Democrats, and more than this no reasonable man can expect or desire.

My fellow-citizens, to most of you I am a stranger, but my friends in Kentucky usually give me credit for being an earnest worker, and for being sincere, and I now state to you from this platform as earnestly as I ever uttered a word in my life, that it is my belief that this government never has been in better hands since its foundation than it will be in the four years following the 4th of next March, if we are so fortunate as to succeed in electing Rutherford B. Hayes and William A. Wheeler next November. The quiet, earnest manner in which these two men have lived and done their work, should teach us that it is not always necessary to make loud demonstrations, or create great excitement, to accomplish grand undertakings. The shallower the stream the more it babbles; but we find from close observation that, as a rule, silent, earnest, continuous labor is the most effectual, and must and will eventually succeed. It is just as true that the various acts of a man's

life make up his history, as that drops make up the mighty ocean and sands make the sea-shore.

WILLIAM A. WHEELER,

our candidate for Vice-President, is now a member of the lower house of Congress, representing the nineteenth district of the State of New York, made up of Franklin and St. Lawrence counties. According to the last Congressional Directory, he "was born at Malone, New York, June 30, 1819; received an academic education, and was for a year or more a student in the University of Vermont, in the class of 1842; studied and practiced law; was District Attorney of Franklin county, New York, for several years; was a member of the New York House of Assembly in 1850--51; was a member of the New York Senate, and President *pro tem.* of the same in 1858-59; was President of the New York Constitutional Convention in 1867--68; was elected to the thirty-seventh, forty-first, forty-second, and forty-third Congresses, and was re-elected to the forty-fourth Congress as a Republican, receiving 12,323 votes against 5,553 votes for Sawyer, Democrat."

Surely, my friends, it is not very probable that a man of inferior abilities or dishonest principles would be selected to fill the important and responsible positions occupied by this gentleman in his own state, and, in addition to all these, sent five times to the Congress of the general Government. Please allow me to say, also, that I have it from Hon. W. E. Arthur, of my own city, who served in Congress with Mr. Wheeler, that he is a most excellent and able man.

Evidence of so high a character is certainly conclusive as to his fitness and ability, and I think we are perfectly safe in voting for him, and should consider ourselves fortunate in the selection of so good a man for the second place on our ticket.

Now I will not detain you very much longer; I wish to say a few words, however, in conclusion, and I must ask you to allow me to repeat my belief that we can and will succeed in this race, with the admirable ticket we have selected. It has elements in it of too high an order for

failure. I must ask you also to indulge me for a few moments with regard to the nominations made at St. Louis on the 29th of last month.

In spite of all the firing of guns and flourish of trumpets, it is clearly evident to me that the Democratic party is very much dissatisfied with the nomination of Tilden, and all their assertions as to confidence of success are engendered by their great desire, and are only verifications of the old adage, that "a drowning man will catch at a straw."

The St. Louis platform accepts the results of the war, and at the same time places in nomination for the highest office in the gift of the people a man who, from the beginning, was opposed to the war for the Union; and, in 1864, "demanded a cessation of hostilities, and a compromise with the rebels in arms;" and of whom the *Enquirer* said, not long before the convention, that his surroundings were bad, and, if elected, he would take to the White House the worst set of political jobbers and thieves ever seen in Washington. And yet that paper is now advocating his election over Hayes, a man against whom the tongue of slander would wither and become powerless.

The party now, after all its wild, extravagant, and unholy work in the past, comes up from all sides howling and shouting for reform. They repeat it over and over again in the St. Louis platform. They seem to think reform can come from no party but the Democratic party. Well, for the sake of peace, let us admit very candidly that the Democratic party needs reform. When we reflect upon the corrupt practices that elected James K. Polk over Henry Clay; the parenthetical administration of Franklin Pierce; and the weak, disgraceful course pursued by his most imbecile successor, James Buchanan, ending in an impoverished treasury, emptied by dishonest officials, we may well ask if impudence could much further go. Nearly all the deplorable evils that are upon us to-day have been brought about by the bad faith and bad behavior of the Democratic party. They have done everything in their power to break up and forever destroy the government, and failing in that

terrible hazard, they have done every thing, since the close of the war, that they could possibly conceive of to hinder the Republican party from doing its duty. Such conduct is worse than shameful, and merits the prompt and stern rebuke of all good men.

If the Democratic party, in 1860, when Abraham Lincoln was honestly and fairly elected, had acquiesced in that election, as all honest and law-abiding men should have done, where would be the

ENORMOUS PUBLIC DEBT

of to-day? If they had acquiesced in that election, instead of unfurling the Palmetto flag; instead of appropriating millions of dollars to fight against their country; instead of passing ordinances of secession; instead of firing upon Fort Sumter; instead of seizing government arsenals, custom-houses, and military posts, where, in all probability, would be to-day most of the brave men who

NOW SLEEP IN DEATH,

the victims of the late war? These are solemn questions, and I put them most earnestly to every Democrat who is ready to abuse the Republican party, and blame it for not doing more than it has done. I have no desire to harrow up the feelings of any one. I am anxious and willing for "the dead past to bury its dead;" but I am not willing to have my fences torn down, and my growing crops destroyed, and then be abused, by the party that has injured me, for not having an abundant harvest.

Now, gentlemen, Rutherford B. Hayes has been a lawyer, twice a member of Congress, and three times governor of this, the third in rank of the states composing this nation; and I have this to say for him, that never, in all the time from the day when he first took his place among men and entered upon the responsibilities of life, down to this very moment, has a *sobriquet* so odious as

"SLIPPERY SAM"

attached to him. It would be simply impossible for such a

thing to happen. His walk through life has been too upright, and his soul too great for him ever to stoop to anything that would fasten upon him a name so obnoxious, so disgraceful. There is no danger of our ever hearing or seeing in print such an appellation as "Slippery Rutherford" or "Slippery Hayes." The term "slippery" can not apply to him in any sense of the word. It would find no lodgment anywhere. It could not be made to stick. Nothing can ever find itself at home with him except honor and truth, and a firm determination to perform every duty faithfully, without false pride and without vain show.

Regarding the Democratic ticket, the truth is, I do not think they could have done much better or much worse. I mean by this, better for us, or worse for themselves. As for Mr. Hendricks, he is certainly a strange candidate to put forward for the suffrages of Union men. He was in the prime and vigor of a splendid manhood when the rebellion burst upon us; but, instead of going to Governor Morton, as General Grant did to Governor Yates, and offering his services to his country, he made up a record of which I can say most truthfully every good and patriotic man in this nation should feel ashamed. I think, however, with all his faults and failings, he is a better man than Tilden, and that he ought to have had the first place or none; and it now remains to be seen what kind of a vote he can poll, even in Indiana, second upon a ticket upon which he should have been first—a ticket headed by "Slippery Sam," the "wildeat banker" and reformer!

But to conclude. I am far more than anxious for success, and signal success, too, in this most important canvass—the most important since the foundation of the government; and I hope from the bottom of my heart that every Republican in this land will open his eyes to the necessities of the hour—will stand firm to the true political faith of his country; and, with success, we will again see prosperity, happiness, and contentment, from one extreme to the other of our beloved Union—second to none on the face of the globe.



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